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THE AMERICAN WAY OF WAR, SMALL WARS & U.S.  
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by

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## **The American Way of War, Small Wars, & U.S. Military Transformation**

The American way of war is a popular topic of debate among military thinkers. Many argue for a singular strategy or way of war for the U.S. military. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld has driven the Department of Defense (DoD) headlong into his vision of a military transformation that values technology, speed, and flexibility. His noble goal is to prepare the military to fight whatever future threat may arise. This transformation does not intend to promote a singular way of war. Yet in the changes it emphasizes, it favors capabilities better suited for strategies of annihilation and large-scale conflict more than it creates capabilities for small wars. Real military transformation must include more than advanced technologies, organizations, and doctrines. It should offer additional military options not just improvements to options that already exist. Transformation must push the notion of flexibility to the point that U.S. strategy is open and adaptable enough so there is no single American way of war. U.S. response to threats should be integrated, measured, and tailored to deal with the enemies quickly, decisively, but completely with a strategic end-state for peace and stability in mind.

This paper is organized into three sections. Section one discusses the current American way of war and its clash with the modern generation of warfare. Section two deals with the U.S. military transformation and its shortcomings. Section three addresses true U.S. transformation needs and the military attitudes and actions required to meet the requirement for a new American way of war flexible enough to include small wars.

In this paper, large wars are defined as total wars such as the Civil War and World War II. Some limited wars may be included in the large war category if they involve two or more major forces engaging in conventional warfare. The Korean War and first Gulf War are examples. Small wars are generally anything other than large wars. They include conflicts where one side

possesses a dramatically larger military force than the other or where the battles are predominantly asymmetric. Small wars also include counterinsurgency, stabilization, nation-building, peacekeeping, reconstruction, security operations, or similar missions.

## **I. An American “Way” of War?**

### **a. U.S. Military Strategy & “The American Way of War”**

Dr. Russell Weigley’s landmark book, *The American Way of War*<sup>1</sup> is generally considered the starting point for any discussion about U.S. military strategy. This historical review of the U.S. military from the Revolutionary War to Vietnam asserts America’s “way of war” has evolved into a strategy of annihilation of its adversaries. From the Civil War through World War II, the Cold War, and Vietnam, U.S. military thinkers came to define and advocate annihilation as destruction of the enemy’s armed force and with it the complete overthrow of the enemy.<sup>2</sup> This concept reached its zenith in the first Gulf War where Colonel John Warden’s theories of parallel attack and strategic centers of gravity (COGs) helped to rapidly and decisively destroy the Iraqi military.<sup>3</sup> The major combat phases of OIF again illustrated America’s desire and ability to overwhelm its adversary and cemented within its military the annihilation strategy of rapid decisive operations (RDO).<sup>4</sup>

Critics of Weigley’s thesis argue America has engaged its military in many more limited conflicts or “small wars” than in conflicts in which complete destruction of the enemy was the goal.<sup>5</sup> Max Boot contends annihilation is only one way of American warfare and that “there is another, less celebrated tradition in U.S. history—a tradition of fighting small wars.”<sup>6</sup> He argues that in many of America’s small wars, its strategies were haphazard and “designed not to occupy territory but to ‘learn ‘em a lesson.’”<sup>7</sup> Boot and others criticize U.S. strategy “in which a preoccupation with the ‘BIG WAR’ has led us to ignore the ‘little wars’ requirements for

minimal use of firepower, restraint in campaigning and patience over the protracted nature of the contest.”<sup>8</sup> Boot explains:

These [small wars] had seldom been popular with those called to carry them out. It should not be hard to see why. True, many of these operations offer some chance of glory, an opportunity eagerly seized by the likes of Stephen Decatur, Fredrick Funston, and Herman Hanneken. But such glory is more fleeting than most. Whereas the generals who lead big name armies in big wars—from Sherman to Schwartzkopf—remain household names, who now remembers Smedley Butler, John Rogers, or J. Franklin Bell? True soldiers naturally want to prove their mettle fighting against other professional soldiers. True warriors would like nothing better than to take part in a clash of armies...where martial skill can be displayed in its ‘pure’ form, without worrying about nettlesome political complications.<sup>9</sup>

This is surely Weigley’s unspoken point; U.S. military leaders are reluctant to risk resources and lives in conflicts where non-military factors, like political will, might steal victory from military success. They thus focus all of their intellectual and material resources on strategies of annihilation and like Jomini, view small wars as “too destructive, too costly, and uncontrollable to be part of any scientific study of strategy.”<sup>10</sup> As Boot describes it, “the primary characteristic of small wars is that there is no obvious field of battle; there are only areas to be controlled, civilians to be protected, hidden foes to be subdued. Soldiers must figure out who the enemy is before killing him; make a mistake and, like Major Littleton W.T. Waller or Lieutenant William Calley, you are likely to face court-martial. There is little satisfaction in winning such a war...but much grief if you lose, as the army found out after Russia in 1919 and in Vietnam.”<sup>11</sup> The public often ignores success in small-scale conflicts, but failure is endlessly fascinating. This explains why General Custer is one of the most famous figures in American history.<sup>12</sup>

Yet as Vietnam, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Iraq have clearly demonstrated, America cannot ignore small wars. The U.S. military drew a curious lesson from Vietnam. Instead of improving strategies to fight small wars, it determined, a la Jomini, to avoid them altogether.<sup>13</sup> Boot connects present U.S. annihilation strategy and Vietnam: “The Powell Doctrine, which grew out

of the debacle of Vietnam and was nourished by the military's traditional distaste for small wars, has come to stand for an all-or-nothing approach to warfare, with the ideal war being one in which the U.S. wins with overwhelming force, suffers few casualties, and leaves immediately."<sup>14</sup>

What are the implications of the Powell Doctrine in the post-Cold War world? Boot laments: "So few missions short of World War II satisfy the Powell checklist that, if strictly applied, it becomes a recipe for inaction."<sup>15</sup> The Powell Doctrine ironically created more uncertainty than clear direction for use of the U.S. military. "The irony of Somalia was the opposite of what it had been in the Gulf War. In the Gulf, fear of a small war (the occupation of Iraq) had prevented a big war from being carried out to a completely satisfactory conclusion; in Somalia, fear of a big war prevented a small war from being waged effectively. These are the yin and yang of the Vietnam Syndrome."<sup>16</sup> Vietnam and the Powell Doctrine have led to an American way of war that has become a strategy of annihilation or no war at all.

## **b. Clash of Generations**

Given America's narrow focus on large-scale conflict and its overwhelmingly superior capabilities to wage such wars, it is unlikely that an enemy will rise to challenge the U.S. head-on force-on-force. It is more likely challengers of American policies or presence will resort to indirect or asymmetric means. America's adversaries know small wars are the only kind it has ever lost. This form of warfare also defeated the French in Vietnam and Algeria and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. It continues to exhaust Russia in Chechnya and the U.S. in Iraq and Afghanistan. These successes against major powers by much weaker opponents makes it essential to understand and adapt to small wars.<sup>17</sup> The threats posed by the new "geostrategic realities" render the Powell Doctrine obsolete<sup>18</sup> and America can no longer ignore small war necessities and effectively defend its interests. The world is in a period when conventional war

between states is unlikely, but mounting global discontent arising from globalization, slow economic development, political, economic, and social unrest, widespread anger and resentment, environmental decay, population pressure, transnational organized crime, and the widespread availability of arms makes insurgency common and strategically significant.<sup>19</sup>

Given this new global strategic balance, some question the necessity to engage in small wars especially when there are few historical examples where foreign powers have won decisively or achieved their desired, long-term results in such conflicts.<sup>20</sup> With failure in small wars so common, might the Powell Doctrine still apply? The answer is powerful nations lose small wars because they are unprepared to wage them. Unlike Jomini, Clausewitz, accepted small wars as an important part of a nation's military strategy and further recognized it as a drawn-out affair strongly influenced by the national character of the states involved.<sup>21</sup> Retired Army General Montgomery Meigs agrees. While he concedes Vietnam left many military thinkers averse to anything but classical military operations, he also asserts the military cannot be saved only to fight the next world war and must adjust "to prevent the benefits of unconventional conflict by adapting to the current reality."<sup>22</sup> The new "geostrategic realities" have created a world where global terrorism and massive humanitarian crises cannot be ignored. In the past, small wars have been "background noise" but now they are "strategically significant, undercutting regional stability, drawing outsiders into direct conflict, and spawning humanitarian disasters."<sup>23</sup> Even small regional insurgencies can be vital to U.S. economic and security interests.

Jason Vest argues U.S. military leaders have exhibited "willful ignorance" by continuously ignoring the lessons of small wars and their lack of preparation for the insurgency in Iraq.<sup>24</sup> He says they have "lagged" in developing small wars capabilities: "This kind of fighting eschews heavy firepower, attrition, and long-range, high-altitude bombardment. It favors joint-service



operations and close-quarters combat involving small, fast moving units with lighter equipment.”<sup>25</sup> British Brigadier Nigel Alwin-Foster is also critical. He asserts the U.S. is “too kinetic” and “too inclined to consider offensive operations and destruction of the insurgent as the key to a given situation”, and conversely fails to consider any negative consequences.<sup>26</sup>

The late Admiral Arthur Cebrowski was tasked by Secretary Rumsfeld to lead the military’s transformation and modernize its doctrine and capabilities. Admiral Cebrowski stated, “The rise of asymmetrical warfare is largely our own creation. We are creating the mismatch in means as we increasingly extend the reach of our warfighting machine down the range of conflict—past the peer competitor, past the rogue nation-state, right down to individual enemy combatants. This constitutes in itself an amazing transformation of the American Way of War over the past generation.”<sup>27</sup> The U.S. ability to annihilate its enemies has become so great; most no longer choose to fight it force-on-force. To engage an adversary, the military must be able to engage an enemy on its asymmetric or unconventional terms. As violence moves from the state to the individual level, the U.S. military must adapt its thinking from large wars to the small conflict.<sup>28</sup>

## **II. A U.S. Military Transformation?**

### **a. Rumsfeld’s Transformation.**

Unsatisfied with a globally superior but complex, strategically immobile, stove-piped, and sometimes-inflexible military, President Bush and Secretary Rumsfeld have called for a defense transformation to “challenge the status quo and envision a new architecture of American defense for decades to come.”<sup>29</sup> Secretary Rumsfeld wants to renovate the military and the organizations and processes that control, support, and sustain it. He states, “We need to change not only the capabilities at our disposal, but also how we think about war. All the high-tech weapons in the

world will not transform the U.S. armed forces unless we also transform the way we think, the way we train, the way we exercise, and the way we fight.”<sup>30</sup> Speed, maneuver, flexibility, and surprise are hallmarks of this transformation<sup>31</sup> and despite a few promising references to small wars, transformation literature is dominated by capabilities suited to strategies of annihilation.

Paramount to this transformation is a zealous emphasis on forces built around speed: speed of deployment, speed of organization, speed of employment, speed of sustainment.<sup>32</sup> Admiral Cebrowski said, “Not trying to be everywhere all the time, but to be exactly where you need to be exactly when you need to be there.”<sup>33</sup> Much of Secretary Rumsfeld’s vision pivots on this concept: “Our new defense strategy requires agile, network-centric forces that can take action from forward positions, rapidly reinforce from other areas and defeat adversaries swiftly and decisively.”<sup>34</sup> Admiral Cebrowski stated, “The decision to go to war must never be quick, but a defining characteristic of the American Way of War is the growing ability of U.S. forces to execute operations with unprecedented speed...we may choose our punches with great care (strategy), only to unleash them with blinding speed (operations, tactics).”<sup>35</sup>

This emphasis on speed is evident in the military’s joint operations concept of RDO. RDO’s goal is to “asymmetrically assault the adversary from directions/dimensions against which he has no counter, dictating operational terms and tempo. The adversary, suffering from loss of coherence and unable to achieve its objectives, chooses to cease [anti-U.S. actions] or has his capabilities defeated.”<sup>36</sup> RDO “combines two prominent themes in post-Cold War U.S. military thought and defense discourse: rapidity in operations and overwhelming military superiority.”<sup>37</sup> These notions, reinforced by transformation guidance “pervade U.S. military thought, witnessed by the proliferation of terms such as ‘full spectrum dominance’, ‘dominant battlespace awareness’, ‘dominant maneuver.’”<sup>38</sup> The *2004 U.S. National Military Strategy* touts forces that

“rapidly conduct globally dispersed, simultaneous operations...to decisively defeat adversaries.”<sup>39</sup> U.S. forces “must combine speed, agility, and superior warfighting ability to generate decisive effects.”<sup>40</sup> Despite the charge to transform organization, thinking, and practice, the U.S. military maintains its cultural bias for strategies of speed in annihilation.

U.S. military infatuation with speed and its aversion to small wars go hand in glove. Dr. Thomas Hughes explores the military obsession with speed and asserts it was not always so:

Rapidity was not always a touchstone in American military thought, despite positive references to it in many of the strategic analyses favored by the Pentagon. In the War of Independence, George Washington’s Continental Army leveraged a patient, incremental, and modulated campaign against the world’s greatest military force. Eventually, the British Empire decided that further hostilities in the New World were not in its interests. During the Civil War, the Anaconda Plan reflected the Union Army’s strategic preference to defeat the Confederacy through a slow and deliberate squeezing; it was the South, the weaker military power, that sought a swift outcome on the battlefield. Throughout the frontier wars, which stretched from well before independence to shortly before 1900, the American Army marched westward no faster than expanding white settlement required.<sup>41</sup>

Hughes suggests America’s desire for speed gathered momentum in the twentieth century with expanding strategic obligations and help from speed-minded airpower theorists like General Billy Mitchell. The need for speed took root in the military psyche during the Cold War when, for the first time in history, widespread destruction was possible at a moment’s notice. Finally, the Vietnam experience appeared to validate this mindset as the gradual, limited conflict resulted in U.S. failure to achieve its objectives. The Powell Doctrine sprang, in part, from this inertia.<sup>42</sup> “Only in a society obsessed with speed...could the lesson from the Vietnam War be to conduct faster operations next time. A more balanced assessment would certainly include an appreciation for the patient approach, a weapon deployed with great success by North Vietnam.”<sup>43</sup>

Against a conventional enemy, America’s strategy of annihilation and affinity for rapid and decisive victory is advantageous. Yet for much of the world, conflict has devolved into a mix of

state and non-state actors with little distinction between war and peace. To counter U.S. dominance, enemies will adopt asymmetric styles and moral ambiguities. America must hence be prepared to fight slow, deliberate, and even indecisive conflicts.<sup>44</sup> The “old American way of war” that relied on “gathering maximum manpower and materiel, hurling them into the maelstrom, and counting on swift, crushing victory” works well against conventional foes but is “nothing short of disastrous when fighting insurgents.”<sup>45</sup> But patience works against America’s cultural grain. Former Army Chief of Staff, General George Marshall asserted Americans cannot fight a 7-years war<sup>46</sup> and this lack of patience is a distinct disadvantage in small wars against other cultures. Western democracies highly value “military greatness which is brilliant and sudden. On the Arab street, however, a rapid dominance zeitgeist does not resonate.”<sup>47</sup>

Hughes elaborates on this cultural clash noting western societies mark time by constant velocity in standard ways. Societies elsewhere may reference time not with clocks but with events and time is less discrete and more variant. Some Mediterranean and Arab cultures define only three sets of time: no time at all, now (varying duration), and forever (too long). Different cultures clearly approach time and speed with different attitudes.<sup>48</sup> Cultural differences caused even Sun Tzu and Clausewitz to view time and strategy differently.<sup>49</sup> Use of time may call for patience instead of speed. Infatuation with speed limits military options and can give the adversary advantages in “strategy’s temporal dimension.”<sup>50</sup> While the U.S. military religiously fights to get inside the enemy’s decision cycle, to destroy his ability to see and react to the battle, the enemy may choose to wait outside of the U.S. decision cycle and allow America to strike fast and furious without meaningful effect and without achieving its strategic objectives.

In this context, a strategy predicated on speed can be narrow-minded. “The Pentagon’s decree for speed across all levels of war commits a cardinal sin of strategy by assuming a

consistent value of velocity between ally and adversary...In making speed a mandated weapon in its repertoire, the Pentagon makes patience an asymmetric threat in the quivers of those who would wait out an impulsive America.”<sup>51</sup> Effective small war strategies require coherent, patient action. The U.S. cannot force its adversaries to fight the short, high-tech wars it easily dominates. America must learn to fight small wars with small wars strategies.<sup>52</sup>

U.S. political leaders have begun to recognize the need for patience included in the strategy mix that has long favored speed and dominance. In his *National Security Strategy*, President Bush asserts that against some threats, “progress will come through the persistent accumulation of successes—some seen, some unseen”<sup>53</sup> and “there will be no quick or easy end” to some of our conflicts.<sup>54</sup> Contrary to General Marshall, President Bush asks for American patience: “Rebuilding Iraq will require a sustained commitment...we will remain in Iraq as long as necessary, and not a day more.”<sup>55</sup> The President seems to understand what many U.S. military leaders do not; “to date, no effort at enforced democratization has been brought to successful conclusion in less than seven years.”<sup>56</sup> Impatience with long-term conflicts has interfered with success.<sup>57</sup> Hughes asserts that speed and overwhelming force may produce short-term results but may also prove counterproductive “when matched against the very difficult internal problems that form the underlying problems in target countries.”<sup>58</sup>

## **b. Strategic End State Still Unaddressed**

The need for patience in small wars creates a “tension between the ideal rapid dominance approach captured in the public imagination and the exigencies of fighting an insurgency.”<sup>59</sup> One author suggests this tension results in an American way of battle more than a way of war: “The American way of war tends to shy away from thinking about the complicated process of turning military triumphs, whether on the scale of major campaigns or small-unit actions, into

strategic successes.”<sup>60</sup> Infatuated with speed and decisive victory, military leaders tend to lose focus on the desired end-state and on the processes and capabilities needed to translate military victory into strategic success.<sup>61</sup> “Analysis of small wars...reinforces the lesson that military success in any specific phase of a campaign is not the final arbiter of overall success.”<sup>62</sup>

“*Combat* is characterized by breaking things and killing people; *war* is about much more than that.” This distinction is new in the history of war. Advanced weapons have made it possible to destroy an enemy’s armed forces without also physically occupying his territory,<sup>63</sup> but modern war often requires occupying or pacifying a country in transition. Conventional combat is only a part of an overall conflict. It has become increasingly likely for a large conventional force to win all its battles, yet lose the war.<sup>64</sup> Retired Marine Corps General Anthony Zinni agrees: “There’s a difference...defeating the enemy in battle, and winning the war. And I think the first question we have to ask ourselves is why is that happening and what is the military’s role, then, in taking it beyond just defeating the enemy in battle?”<sup>65</sup>

“The characteristics of the U.S. style of warfare—speed, jointness, knowledge, and precision—are better suited for strike operations than for translating such operations into strategic successes.” Despite U.S. strength in the former and weakness in the later, DoD transformation focuses primarily on advancing strike capability rather than balancing its strategic repertoire.<sup>66</sup> General Zinni says, “We are great at dealing with the tactical problems...we are lousy at solving the strategic problems.”<sup>67</sup> This is a concern when, as in Iraq, “the true center of gravity in a war of regime change lies not in the destruction of the old system, but in the creation of the new one.”<sup>68</sup> Current U.S. military concepts like RDO cannot translate the destruction of the enemy’s ability to fight into the accomplishment of the political objectives.<sup>69</sup> Yet, while small wars are sometimes mentioned in transformation literature, they receive little in the way of

specifics. General Zinni warns, “Whatever blood is poured out onto the battlefield could be wasted if we don’t follow it up with understanding what victory is.”<sup>70</sup>

Though dominated by conventional warfare advances, Secretary Rumsfeld’s transformation does address small wars. In *Elements of Defense Transformation*, he asserts, “There is an urgent need to study, train, and practice techniques and procedures for operating...where the goal is not to take over or destroy, but rather to stabilize, rebuild and keep functioning vital economic and social infrastructures.”<sup>71</sup> The idea that there is more to warfare than battles is gaining ground but practical military changes have not followed. Clausewitz said, “No one starts a war—or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so—without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it.”<sup>72</sup> The Powell Doctrine is touted for asserting this but the U.S. has missed the key point in applying it. B.H. Liddell-Hart expands on Clausewitz: “If you concentrate exclusively on victory, with no thought for the after effect, you may be too exhausted to profit by the peace, while it is almost certain that the peace be a bad one, containing the germs of another war.”<sup>73</sup>

The first Gulf War and the resumption of hostilities in OIF seem to illustrate this problem. “Conflict termination and resolution clearly are not the same thing. Conflict resolution is a long process...through advantageous conflict termination, however, the military can set the conditions for successful conflict resolution.”<sup>74</sup> A desired end-state in U.S. conflicts is always a better state of peace but victorious conflict termination in defeat of enemy forces does not necessarily secure a better peace. The current U.S. strategy of annihilation does address the transition from decisive operations to post-conflict operations. There is no provision for simultaneous decisive combat and stability or security operations to impose our will upon an enemy that is no longer a coherent military force but has decomposed into insurgency.<sup>75</sup>

The U.S. military's fixation with rapid and decisive combat and lack of end-state focus offers an inflexible, unimaginative military strategy. It has placed the greater investment in preparing for the types of conflict America least often faces<sup>76</sup> and forces the U.S. to relearn old lessons with each outbreak of a small war.<sup>77</sup> Failure to adapt has created a "one-size-fits-all" annihilation approach to American strategy that actually prolongs and exacerbates small wars.<sup>78</sup> "Doctrine prepares warriors for the next war and is often a repeat of the last war's successful experience. But what happens when the next opponent does not follow the script?"<sup>79</sup> General Marshall warned, "The leader who frantically strives to remember what someone else did in some slightly similar situation has already set his feet on a well traveled road to ruin."<sup>80</sup> Admiral Cebrowski agreed, "My biggest concern is that we will attempt to pursue the one best way. This would be a grave error. We don't want the one best warfighting concept. We want to have alternative, competing concepts with continuous debate...We need a new ethos which is tolerant of continuing debate at the operational, organization and tactical levels."<sup>81</sup>

While the U.S. military must continue to prepare for the "big war", it can no longer afford to ignore the small missions it is certain to face in the meantime.<sup>82</sup> Secretary Rumsfeld's guidance to the military shows this shift in thinking. DoD Directive 3000.05 was issued in November 2005 and addresses the military's ability to conduct small wars missions. It says, "Stability operations are a core U.S. military mission that the Department of Defense shall be prepared to conduct and support. They shall be given priority comparable to combat operations and be explicitly addressed and integrated across all DoD activities including doctrine, organizations, training, education, exercise, material, leadership, personnel, facilities and planning."<sup>83</sup>

Now that DoD has mandated small wars as a "core" military capability, some may argue the issues raised in this paper are mute. However, civilian leadership has pushed the military to



accept the small wars mission before. In the 1960's, President Kennedy declared small wars on the periphery of the "Free World" as the greatest challenge to our national security and touted counterinsurgency's use for political and economic reform.<sup>84</sup> Uniformed military leadership, reluctant to embrace this mission, waited the administration out and the Vietnam experience took care of the rest.<sup>85</sup>

"I'll be damned if I permit the United States Army, it's institutions, it's doctrine, and it's traditions to be destroyed just to win this lousy war," was one U.S. general's evaluation of Vietnam.<sup>86</sup> This spirit is still alive in America's uniformed leadership. During stability operations in Iraq, one U.S. general said reluctance to use force merely bolstered the insurgent's courage and resilience, demonstrated lack of resolve to the local population, and prolonged the conflict.<sup>87</sup> Brigadier Alwin-Foster observed that many U.S. leaders see the only effective strategy as total destruction of the enemy by killing or capturing all insurgents.<sup>88</sup> His perceptions as an outsider are troubling. If coalition partners view America as bullying, how must the Iraqi population feel? Notwithstanding Directive 3000.05, uniformed American leaders must embrace the military transformation to include small wars and help implement changes for the long-term.

### **III. Real Transformation Needs: Attitudes and Actions**

#### **a. Transformation in Military Attitudes**

The military's problem with small wars is not its doctrine. There is plenty of U.S. military doctrine concerning counterinsurgency, peacekeeping, and stabilization. Joint Publication 3-07, *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other than War*<sup>89</sup> and the *Joint Task Force Commander's Handbook for Peace Operations*<sup>90</sup> are good examples. The *Army Transformation Roadmap 2003* includes a document called *Stability Operations Joint Operating Concept* that addresses

joint stability operations.<sup>91</sup> Further, there is no shortage of theories on how to improve small wars capabilities as many experts have addressed the topic in books and journals. T.E. Lawrence discussed counterinsurgency principles as early as 1935 in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*<sup>92</sup> and David Galula's *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* from the 1960s<sup>93</sup> is core to much of existing U.S. small wars doctrine. A contemporary example is Hans Binnendijk and Stuart Johnson's analysis, *Transforming for Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations*.<sup>94</sup> The U.S. problem with small wars is not its doctrine; it is the military's attitudes and actions.

A change in U.S. military small wars mind-set requires a cultural change at two levels. The first level is an attitude accepting small wars as another core function of the force. Directive 3000.05 and Secretary Rumsfeld's transformation call for this. "Transformation reflects the shift of the military focus from fighting great power wars to fighting as a great power force."<sup>95</sup> This difference is subtle but important. General Marshall saw this need after WWII. "The art of war has no traffic with rules, for the infinitely varied circumstances and conditions of combat never produce exactly the same situation twice...A competent tactician must first close his mind to the alluring formulae that well-meaning people offer in the name of victory...He must learn to cut to the heart of a situation, recognize its decisive elements and base his course of action on these."<sup>96</sup>

Despite General Marshall's early stance on flexibility, "no formal organizational strategy exists that allows the army to rapidly and effectively adapt."<sup>97</sup> This is why current transformation efforts are crucial. General Meigs asserts, "While our current military capability must focus on preparation for the challenges of a major war in which operational tasks are fairly well-known ahead of time, U.S. planners must simultaneously prepare to operate in contingency operations like those in Afghanistan and the Balkans."<sup>98</sup> U.S. military attitudes must embrace and prepare for small wars as a core mission just as it prepares to deal with conventional foes.

General Marshall said, “It is more valuable to be able to analyze one battle situation correctly, recognize its decisive elements and devise a simple, workable solution for it, than to memorize all the erudition ever written of war.”<sup>99</sup> In Vietnam, the military fought a guerrilla enemy with familiar conventional strategies despite President Kennedy’s assertions that “guerrilla war requires a whole new kind of strategy.”<sup>100</sup> The military became trapped in Weigley’s American way of war—a strategy of annihilation against an inferior foe. This is illustrated General Westmoreland’s answer to the question of how to fight an insurgency. His narrow reply: “Firepower.”<sup>101</sup> This was not just one leader’s view. Another U.S. general said, “The solution in Vietnam is more bombs, more shells, more napalm...till the other side cracks up and gives up.”<sup>102</sup> U.S. firepower in Vietnam was awesome, but it did not defeat the enemy. The same mindset in OIF seems to have lengthened the conflict. The initial, conventional phases were well planned and wildly successful. Saddam Hussein’s regime was defeated with historic speed. Yet the insurgency that followed appears to have been an afterthought despite warnings from many analysts.<sup>103</sup> Encouraging innovation, and risk-taking will require a major shift in U.S. military culture. Popular myth says the military embraces these attributes, but history shows that while such leadership is tolerated with successful generals, it is rarely encouraged.<sup>104</sup>

Infatuation with the body-count metric and loss of public support are familiar aspects of the Vietnam conflict. Vietnam was followed by the first Gulf War and seemingly miraculous stealth and precision weapons, which dramatically minimized U.S. casualties and collateral damage. These phenomena have created a fixation with rapid dominance and casualty avoidance. This risk aversion is tied to the American way of war that calls for rapid annihilation of the enemy—get in, get it done, and get out or don’t go in at all. This attitude created a near impossible situation in Somalia where a quick strike against a warlord resulted in 19 U.S. casualties. The

operational failure forced the U.S. to withdraw from an operation that had been a strategically successful to that point.<sup>105</sup> This added to U.S. casualty aversion that likely caused a reluctance to commit ground troops in Bosnia and Kosovo. This fear may also have been the root of U.S. apathy to the mass genocide tragedy in Rwanda. Boot states a body-count metric can backfire cruelly. “If foreign enemies know that killing a few Americans will drive the U.S. out of their country, they are far more likely to target American soldiers and civilians...Every time U.S. forces flee some country after suffering casualties, it make it less likely that the U.S. will be able to accomplish its objectives in the future *without* using force.”<sup>106</sup>

The rapid dominance success in the first Gulf War and the early phases of OIF prove speed and precision on the battlefield are still important capabilities. Yet a lack of casualties in any example should not dictate that America fight only when casualties can be avoided. Nor does it prove that strategic speed is required in every conflict. Speed is necessary in some scenarios but patience and persistence are required in others. This may include tolerating U.S. casualties. The ability to simply occupy a segment of territory without killing anyone is critical to small wars.<sup>107</sup>

Ironically, swift and decisive military victories often lead to difficult post-conflict operations.<sup>108</sup> In small wars, U.S. strategic attacks are usually counterproductive in terms of winning hearts and minds. Local populations generally respond better to face-to-face security and peacekeeping forces willing to put themselves in harm’s way than to unmanned and precision weapons. It’s a perception of legitimacy issue. Patience to wait to react to aggression, measured reaction to defeat aggression, and a persistence to remain focused on desired objectives despite casualties increase perceived legitimacy. These are crucial U.S. military attributes that belong along side RDO in the U.S. arsenal.

While there is disagreement about blame for the insurgency in Iraq, most agree the U.S. should have been better prepared for it. Most also agree the time to prepare for post-conflict operations is prior to and during conflict in close coordination with conflict planning itself. “Conflict termination is the end of formal fighting, not the end of conflict...Planning for termination and post-conflict operations should begin as early as possible...The first and primary objective in planning for termination and post-conflict peace operations is to establish an achievable end-state based on clear objectives.”<sup>109</sup> A Strategic Studies Institute report by Colonel Bruce Clarke offers a tool for planners in describing end-states to support political and military objectives including a detailed matrix for termination and post-conflict operations.<sup>110</sup> It allows leaders to visualize a conflict from beginning through termination to resolution and helps identify potential issues that must be addressed prior to each phase of the conflict.<sup>111</sup>

## **b. Transformation in Military Actions**

The second cultural change required in the U.S. military, if it is to adapt and excel in small wars, is in actions regarding coordination, capabilities development, and training. The abundant literature about U.S. small wars failings commonly cites these areas as critical to success in current and future conflicts. With respect to coordination, most experts assert the need for better interagency coordination and cooperation between U.S. government agencies and cooperation with coalition partners and non-governmental organizations. With capabilities development, many experts cite a need for enhanced intelligence and information operations resources for better regional and local awareness and robust knowledge sharing within the DoD and among its interagency partners. Finally, most experts stress the need for better training for the U.S. serviceman to broaden his expertise from beyond warfighting to cultural awareness, language

expertise, and civic and economic skills. General Meigs states, “new concepts of military efficiency begin with intelligence and decision theory and end with organization and training.”<sup>112</sup>

Directive 3000.05 stresses “integrated civilian and military efforts” and the need to “work closely with relevant U.S. Departments and Agencies and foreign governments and security forces, global and regional international organizations...U.S. and foreign nongovernmental organizations, and private sector individuals and for-profit companies.”<sup>113</sup> War is not just a military process to be passed to diplomats after the last battle—conflict and post-conflict operations are necessarily interagency.<sup>114</sup> Close cooperation across all elements of national power (diplomatic, information, military, and economic—the DIME) is crucial to strategic success in any conflict. Anthony Cordesman says small wars “are as much political and economic as military” and argues for functional interagency processes and military partnerships with civilian counterparts.<sup>115</sup> Admiral Cebrowski depicted the military’s transformational goals not just in how it fights but also in “how we do business inside the Department” and “how we work with our interagency and multinational partners.”<sup>116</sup> The U.S. interagency system should be “interlocking” with a structure “vested with the power to coordinate political, social, economic, and military elements...under a unified command, a single source of direction.”<sup>117</sup>

Many ideas for better military coordination have been proposed. California Army National Guard Major Reyes Cole offers that counterdrug and counterinsurgency operations share many of the same traits and goals and that the National Guard Counterdrug Support Program has resources and expertise helpful to overburdened commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>118</sup> To enhance the U.S. government interagency process, the State Department has formed the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, to partner with the military early and throughout conflicts.<sup>119</sup> In terms of coalition partner cooperation, Cordesman calls

“interoperability with a true partner” the “best force multiplier.”<sup>120</sup> Since the military battlespace is not always decisive, ultimate success in small wars often requires the military to play a supporting or complementing role to other agencies and partner governments.<sup>121</sup>

Improved U.S. intelligence capabilities are called for in most discussions of small wars. In-depth and in-breadth intelligence is vital. Boot asserts the greatest challenge for America in small wars is not to kill the enemy but to identify the enemy.<sup>122</sup> General Meigs advises a change to the military “mix of minds that generate intelligence requirements to include unorthodox thinkers who probe constantly for the unique and peculiar danger or method of access.”<sup>123</sup> In any conflict, intelligence is critical but deep knowledge of the enemy, geographic and geospatial conditions, and demographic information are crucial to successful small wars operations.<sup>124</sup>

Effective utilization of intelligence is just as important as obtaining it. An additional weakness of U.S. intelligence is its ability to share the right information with the right personnel at the right time. Technology is improving this within the military, but the problem still exists in the interagency and multinational environments. The military must continue to improve its policies, procedures, and technologies to allow information sharing with its partners.

More important than information operations within coalitions are information campaigns outside U.S.-led organizations. Small wars require the ability to “fight” on the cognitive domain and the U.S. must “develop and deploy psychological operations units, propaganda operations, and social service units that foster the impression that the government is addressing underlying socio-economic problems.”<sup>125</sup> An insurgent must be prevented from espousing his cause while the population is made clearly aware of the benefits of U.S. intervention.<sup>126</sup>

Individual, joint, and interagency training are critical to the success of U.S. small wars capability. General Marshall said, “It is essential that all leaders—from subaltern to

commanding general—familiarize themselves with the art of clear logical thinking...[They] must realize that training in solving problems of all types, long practice in making clear, unequivocal decisions, the habit of concentrating on the question at hand, and an elasticity of mind, are indispensable requisites for the successful practice of the art of war.”<sup>127</sup> Military training should be modified to reflect the lessons of recent conflicts<sup>128</sup> and should include stabilization and peacekeeping.<sup>129</sup> General Meigs advises, “Leaders need to be trained to recognize the warning signs and to expand their approaches to this new environment. We must provide them the tools to prevent the benefits of unconventional conflict by adapting to the current reality.”<sup>130</sup> “Soldiers must master warfighting skills to secure terrain and towns while working peacefully with the local populace and, hopefully, persuading them that nonviolence is the best path to stability.”<sup>131</sup>

There is more to training than strategy and tactics. Sadly, much of the U.S. population, including the military, is culturally ignorant. The military’s transformation must address this in training. Culture is important both internationally and organizationally. Awareness and sensitivity are important when working with other cultures. They are also important when working with other agencies with differing organizational cultures.<sup>132</sup> “Leader development and training must include increased cultural sensitivity and the ability to communicate across cultural boundaries...with the ability to innovate and adapt.”<sup>133</sup> “Leaders at all levels must understand and trust the capabilities of other agencies,” therefore “professional education and training increasingly must be interagency and multinational.”<sup>134</sup> Mr. Cordesman warns, “political legitimacy is measured in local terms, and not in terms of American ideology.” He argues, effective warfighting demands recognition that regional allies may not value U.S. ideas on democracy. “In most of the world, ‘legitimacy’ has little to do with governments being elected, and a great deal to do with governments being popular.”<sup>135</sup> To address these issues, military



training should include: culture, language, law and civics, public administration, economics, and ethics.<sup>136</sup> This is in line with Directive 3000.05 which states, “foreign language skills, regional area expertise, and experience with foreign governments and International Organizations shall be developed and incorporated into Professional Military Education at all levels”<sup>137</sup>

General Zinni summed up the military transformation requirement: “On the one hand, you have to shoot and kill somebody [intel]; on the other hand, you have to build an economy, restructure the infrastructure, and build the political system [training & cooperation]...with NGO’s and political wannabes running around [cooperation & information operations], with factions and a culture you don’t understand [culture & intel].”<sup>138</sup> [summations mine]

### **c. Transformation in Attitude: Products to People**

Most U.S. generals speak of the soldier, sailor, airman, and marine as America’s most valuable resource. Is this sentiment platitude or sincere? The question is valid when viewed beside the vicious inter-service rivalry to procure the latest high-tech weapons. Many of these same generals ask Congress for money for training and quality-of-life for their troops but the real battles on Capitol Hill are about procurement. The dichotomy is important—to meet the small wars obligation, transformation requires better personnel programs, not weapon systems and technology. Transformation must shift some focus from the expensive weapons of large wars to training and management of people who can best affect victorious small war outcomes.

This is not an all or nothing proposal. The military still needs the ability to dominate a conventional conflict but a balance must be struck to obtain the flexibility to conduct warfare at whatever level U.S enemies dictate. Boot says the Marines and Special Forces are better at small wars because they focus on people over technology. The Marines do enjoy the dominance of their aircraft, vehicles, and weapons but their focus is on combined arms flexibility to maximize

capabilities against the full-spectrum of adversaries. They largely leave the procurement battles to the other services, sharing aircraft with the Navy and mechanized vehicles with the Army.

There are three COGs in Iraq: the Iraqi people, the American people, and the U.S. soldier.<sup>139</sup> These COGs are human and cannot be secured by technology alone. The insurgency, with its political and ideological dimensions is far more human-centric than netcentric. Sensors, UAV, and ISR have value in Iraq, but they are not “magic bullets.”<sup>140</sup> This “technical fetish mentality” has not led to better cultural intelligence<sup>141</sup> or effectively addressed the key COG in most small wars, the local population.<sup>142</sup> To protect human-centric COGs, the U.S. cannot “blow up one building or square block to take out a few snipers or bombers, and sorry if anyone else gets killed in the process. It’s not going to win us any friends. Stringing Baghdad with sensors or putting Predators over all Iraq isn’t going to stop this either. We’d be better off with a division of MP’s and civil affairs specialists that knew the turf, backed by good native intelligence and police.”<sup>143</sup>

The Air Force, for example, tends to focus on the destructive side of airpower and not the constructive side, often more useful in small wars.<sup>144</sup> Boot states, “airpower, no matter how awesome, cannot police newly liberated countries—or build democratic governments.”<sup>145</sup> Ground forces are needed to police populations and root out insurgents but airpower, with the proper mindset, can have an effective supporting role in this mission. Enhanced doctrine, compatible force structure, and employment planning tools, could help airpower be as useful in construction and stability as it is in destruction.<sup>146</sup> One idea is a manned vehicle with loiter capability equipped with high-tech sensors and low-tech loud speakers for crowd control and PSYOPS. One proposal is the old North American Rockwell OV-10D as a low-cost solution. It could loiter over hot spots to project power and presence and direct fire as needed. The two-seat vehicle could be manned at first, by an American and a local security officer for legitimacy and

cultural awareness purposes. Later, the aircraft and its mission could be turned over completely to the local security force as U.S. presence is phased out. This proposal is much less expensive than many other airpower procurement projects, would provide legitimacy to the local U.S. supported forces, and not threaten neighboring countries.<sup>147</sup> The goal is a human-centric focus for airpower solutions to address the human-centric nature of small wars.

#### **d. Transformation in Action: Force Structure & Procurement.**

To include small wars as a core military competency, spending of some tax dollars must change. Money must shift from some mega-expensive procurement programs into systems, research, and personnel development to improve small wars capabilities. The Air Force F-22A and Navy Sea Basing platforms are awesome systems and needed to keep air and sea superiority against future conventional adversaries. Air and sea supremacy are vital U.S. interests and must never be taken for granted. These programs also provide jobs to thousands of congressional constituents. However, air and sea dominance systems have limited utility in counterinsurgency or nation-building. Perhaps these programs can be maintained by buying fewer weapon systems each year but over a greater number of years. America must continue to maintain the capabilities and advance the technologies these systems provide. However, keeping the production lines that produce these systems open and creative should be the aim while the nation fights a global war against insurgent terrorists and not a mass of enemy troops riding in tanks, ships, and fighter jets.

The Army's procurement programs do not address small wars either. The strategically-immobile M1 tank is to be replaced by the Future Combat Systems (FCS). The Army's FCS goal is light, sustainable, maneuverable, high-firepower, netcentric vehicle capable of protecting the troops inside it.<sup>148</sup> The problem is the technology to build this enviable weapon system does not yet exist, will not for several years, and will be expensive when developed.<sup>149</sup> The Army's

dilemma in seeking advanced technologies is which to pursue first in its quest to achieve mobility and survivability.<sup>150</sup> Most Army weapons systems rely on standoff “see-first-shoot-first” tactics. Outside of the well-armored (but still vulnerable from the rear<sup>151</sup>) M1, the Army has sacrificed armor for speed, maneuverability, and sensors. The Bradley and Stryker vehicles have proven useful but vulnerable in rugged terrain and to artillery fire.<sup>152</sup> Lightly armored, netcentric vehicles may also prove vulnerable to information warfare and EMP weapons.<sup>153</sup>

Regardless, “see-first-shoot-first” is not optimal for small wars. Peacekeepers cannot shoot everyone who *might* harm them. Success in small wars means taking risks mitigated by the fact that U.S. soldiers have a good chance of survival even if an enemy opens fire. In many cases, it is highly desirable to allow the enemy to take the first shot. Otherwise, peacekeepers risk compromising their objectives and creating a crisis that might have been avoided.<sup>154</sup> In small wars, survivability and persistence are as important as speed and precision.

In addition to modifying procurement plans to maintain conventional dominance while integrating small wars capabilities, the military must also grapple with the force structure suited to obtain this objective. Should America create a separate small wars force or should the bulk of the responsibility fall to the current military force structure? A well-known stance on the subject of U.S. troops and small wars comes from Former Marine Corps Commandant, General Charles Krulak. He referred to the challenges posed by small wars as the “three block war” or “contingencies in which Marines may be confronted by the entire spectrum of tactical challenges in the span of a few hours and within the space of three contiguous city blocks.”<sup>155</sup> General Krulak asserted marines should fight the “three block war” with the “strategic corporal.”

Success or failure will rest, increasingly, with the rifleman and with his ability to make the *right* decision at the *right* time at the point of contact...without the direct supervision of senior leadership...[He] will be asked to deal with a bewildering array of challenges and threats [and] will require unwavering maturity, judgment, and strength

of character. Most importantly, these missions will require [him] to confidently make well-reasoned and *independent* decisions under extreme stress—decisions that will likely be subject to the harsh scrutiny of both the media and the court of public opinion. In many cases, the individual Marine will be the most conspicuous symbol of American foreign policy and will potentially influence not only the immediate tactical situation, but the operational and strategic levels as well.<sup>156</sup>

The role of “strategic corporal” is a huge burden to place on the individual soldier. In small wars, these young troops are forced to innovate on the fly where read-and-react decisions may mean not just life or death but national victory or defeat. Secretary Rumsfeld sides with General Krulak. He declares, “our troops need to be able to shift roles, on a block-by-block basis, serving as diplomats one moment, peacekeepers the next, and warfighters when under ambush, in order to win the peace and not just the battle.”<sup>157</sup> Others disagree and advocate a separate peacekeeping force: “Americans should understand the consequences of substituting generals and Green Berets for diplomats, and nineteen-year old paratroopers for police and aid workers on nation-building missions.”<sup>158</sup> One general finds it unreasonable to expect soldiers, highly trained for warfare, to develop the more intricate skills required for the hearts and minds campaign. He advocates leaving post-conflict operations to other organizations.<sup>159</sup>

As a compromise, the best U.S. force structure to fight both the large and small wars of the future should be comprised of both well-trained strategic corporals and specialized small wars specialty units. Primarily conventional strategic corporals should be trained to deal with small wars missions and should support (or be supported by depending upon the specific situation) specialized units in small wars missions. This concept is not radically different from the current military structure. America already has unconventional capabilities in its Special Operations Forces and small units in all the services that specialize in civil affairs, counterinsurgency, foreign internal defense, and more. These small units should be enlarged and train together with the conventional forces as part of U.S. joint force capability. The Binnendijk and Johnson paper

advocates “lego-like” stabilization and reconstruction capabilities provided by two joint commands one active, and one reserve. The aim is modular, scalable, and flexible small wars capabilities within the U.S. forces.<sup>160</sup> Cordesman also supports a hybrid approach that includes civilianizing some military positions and military tour length adjustments to allow critical relationships with allies and local personnel to last longer.<sup>161</sup>

Every successful military in history has relied on skilled leadership as a key factor enabling victory. The U.S. military has been blessed with many great leaders past and present. The question with small wars is at what level is leadership needed most? A critic of the military’s structure remarked, “Do we really need three hundred and eighty-six generals in the Army, each with a staff that generates its own paperwork?” This critic also bemoans the industrial age military personnel system that is top heavy and hierarchical.<sup>162</sup> Brigadier Alwin-Foster is also critical of U.S. force structure, “weighed down by bureaucracy, a stiflingly hierarchical outlook, a pre-disposition to offensive operations, and a sense that duty required all issues to be confronted head-on.”<sup>163</sup> He argues the lynchpin in decentralized operations that characterize small wars is the captain.<sup>164</sup> Others, like General Krulak argue that the key leadership rank is the non-commissioned officer (NCO). Few experts are clamoring for more generals. International conflicts in the past decade demonstrate the U.S. need for “leaders who can shift quickly from combat to stability operations and back again with an eye on winning both war and peace.”<sup>165</sup> “Empowering and entrusting junior leaders to find durable solutions in their unique environments is the only effective way” to fight small wars.<sup>166</sup> Fewer high-salaried flag officers and flatter organizations would permit a needed increase in size of the junior officer and NCO corps to lead the “three block war” envisioned by General Krulak and Secretary Rumsfeld.

## Conclusion

“The big wars, especially the Civil War and World War II, are celebrated in countless books, movies, and documentaries. As it happens, these were America’s only experiences with total war in which the nation staked all of its blood and treasure to achieve the relatively quick and unconditional surrender of the enemy...but this is only one way of American war. There is another, less celebrated tradition in U.S. military history—a tradition of fighting small wars.”<sup>167</sup> Counterinsurgency and reconstruction in Iraq is the latest U.S. small war experience and despite calls by some to withdraw, it is vital the U.S. does not leave until its objectives are fully met. “When a superpower cuts and runs, its next mission becomes much harder to accomplish.”<sup>168</sup> Leaving Iraq too soon would guarantee that strategic objectives are not met and, likely force re-intervention to deal with future security problems. Osama bin Laden’s rise partly resulted from abandoning Afghanistan too soon after foreign occupation in 1979.<sup>169</sup> Despite the lack of weapons of mass destruction or the removal of Saddam, OIF will be judged more by the U.S. commitment to rebuild Iraq than by the purely military phase of the conflict.<sup>170</sup>

President Bush and Secretary Rumsfeld have called for a military transformation. Critics say it is a simplification of U.S. warfare into a targeting drill<sup>171</sup> but a deeper look shows a call for much more. DoD Directive 3000.05 elevates stability operations as a “core U.S. military mission...given priority comparable to combat operations.”<sup>172</sup> DoD’s chief of this effort explained; “Our country is being called on to accomplish three difficult missions at once. First, we must win the global war on terrorism. Second, we must prepare for the wars we may have to fight later in this decade by making a number of long-delayed investments in procurement, people, and modernization. Third, we have to be prepared for the wars of the future.”<sup>173</sup>

In accepting the small wars mission, the U.S. military faces some difficult tasks. The first is to seek strategic flexibility and recognize that patience and persistence in warfare can be as valuable as speed, precision, and dominance. The second task is to realize, “decisive military victory does not equal strategic success.”<sup>174</sup> These tasks are part of a cultural challenge summarized by Brigadier Alwin-Foster:

The planned Army Transformation needs to focus less on generating warfighting capability and much more on:

- The realisation that all military activity is subordinate to political intent, and must be attuned accordingly: mere destruction of the enemy is not the answer.
- The development of a workforce that is genuinely adaptive to changes in purpose, as opposed to merely adapting to be even better at conventional warfighting.
- Keeping the lure of technology in perspective and realizing that the human component is the key to adaptability.<sup>175</sup>

This highlights the need to focus more on people than technology. This human-centric approach applies not just to the U.S. soldier, but also to the adversary and local population. U.S. doctrine is based on the concept of COGs but these are difficult to identify and target if you have a non-nodal enemy.<sup>176</sup> Netcentric is not a substitute for human-centric—it is more important to have effective local forces than more technology.<sup>177</sup>

These ideas lead to tasks three and four: procurement changes to balance conventional and asymmetric capabilities and enhanced force structure and training. General Meigs summarizes:

Our challenge then is to develop an organizational concept that spans the two dimensions. We must continue to possess the forces and systems we need to provide conventional deterrence and, if deterrence fails, to win decisively. As they have been doing in low-intensity conflicts for the last decade, however, these same units must also be able to task organize on short warning into new structures to defeat opponents who seek to apply asymmetrical abilities in idiosyncratic approaches in unconventional settings.<sup>178</sup>

Historically, true changes to the American way of war have required three elements. The first is a strategic level change in U.S. security interests. The second is a change in America’s political will in the use of its military. The last element is a willingness to change in the military



itself. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 changed the U.S. security situation. With the attacks on U.S. soil, President Bush enjoyed enough political support to alter the use of the military to secure the nation. This required engagement of the military in long-term, small wars conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The events of 9/11 created a security requirement to adapt the military and created the political will to do so. What is missing to date is the U.S. military's willingness to embrace the change as permanent. DoD's transformation plan addresses small wars but is dominated by large-scale conventional capabilities. Further, uniformed military leadership as a whole continues to be reluctant to invest in the changes required to address the small war requirement.

The new American consensus in favor of nation building remains a fragile one. There are many who would not want to see the United States involved in further preventative wars, on the Iraq model, and others who would oppose new humanitarian interventions, al a Bosnia. Further setbacks in Iraq could well shift the dominant American view from 'we must do better next time' to 'never again.' If this happens, there is a real danger that everything America has learned about how to conduct such operations will once again be forgotten.<sup>179</sup>

This same phenomenon came in the aftermath of Vietnam. The question of whether the American way of war should be an "all or nothing proposition" is vitally important. Should there be a small wars corollary to the Powell Doctrine that determines the conditions upon which the U.S. engages in small wars? At what point are "the U.S. interests at stake high enough that we are willing to sustain the effort to the end...even if that requires a decade or more and a significant commitment of money and personnel?"<sup>180</sup> Two of the three elements needed for a true military transformation to embrace small wars are in place but may not be permanent. If the U.S. military does not acquiesce for the third element, the momentum gained may be lost along with the opportunity to adapt the American way of war and improve the security of the U.S.

## Notes

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